

REPORT

DATE: May 8, 2008

TO: Regional Council
Community, Economic & Human Development (CEHD) Committee

FROM: Benchmarks Task Force
Ping Chang, Program Manager, (213) 236-1839, chang@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: State of the Region Publication Schedule

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:



RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. Publish the State of the Region Report and Report Card every two years instead of annually.
2. Publish the guest essays separately on an annual basis.

BACKGROUND:

Since 1998, SCAG has been publishing an annual State of the Region Report, and with the exception of 1998, an annual Report Card. The preparation of the Report and Report Card has been under the guidance of the Benchmarks Task Force (current membership is included in Attachment 1). Each year's report release through a press conference has received prominent media coverage, and the State of the Region also received the 2006 PRISM Award and the 2007 Communicator Award. A summary of the annual State of the Region program is included in Attachment 2 containing key program features such as program objectives, intended audiences, report preparation, dissemination and utilization. The 2007 Report released at the end of last year was the tenth State of the Region.

At its March 24, 2008 meeting, the Benchmarks Task Force reviewed recent accomplishments and took actions to recommend a new State of the Region publication schedule. A primary objective of the recommendation is to move the State of the Region Program forward in a more effective way in light of the feedback received and the significant staff reductions.

A comment received over the past year focused on the fact that the Report Card grades generally do not change significantly every year and hence there might not be a need to publish the Report and Report Card every year. The Report Card has always consisted of the same seven issue categories: employment, income, housing, mobility, air quality, education and public safety. Since 1999, seven out of the nine report cards have less than half of the categories experiencing some grade changes from the previous year (Attachment 3). *The Benchmarks Task Force recommended publishing the report and report cards every two years instead of annually so that cumulative changes would be more likely to be detected.* Task Force members were also sensitive to the important need to report about the state of the region, and would not consider a report cycle that is longer than two years.

In addition, Task Force members found that guest essays are of high quality and should receive more attention and be utilized more. Each State of the Region Report contains two to three guest essays

REPORT

focusing on strategic regional issues. Guest essays have been an important part of the annual State of the Region Report. The essays, authored by experts in the respective fields, examine selected strategic regional issues, and explore the underlying factors and dynamics affecting the issues. Most essays also discuss policy implications or furnish specific policy recommendations to move the region forward. A list of all State of the Region guest essays published to-date is included in Attachment 3. *The Benchmarks Task Force recommended publishing the guest essays separately on an annual basis.* The Task Force will continue to discuss the specifics in maximizing the effectiveness to publish guest essays annually. With a recommended two-year cycle for the Report and Report Card, publishing guest essays separately on an annual basis would continue to highlight timely important regional issues and policy recommendations.

Another comment focused on the need to further improve the Report Card grades development process and methodology. It should be noted that after the adoption of the new Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), currently scheduled for October/November 2008, the State of the Region will also begin to track the performance indicators contained in the new RCP. This will then affect the Report Card grades development since there will be new performance indicators and likely additional issue categories. It will also involve additional research and data development to quantify the new performance indicators. Staff is envisioning a phased approach to incorporate the additional RCP performance indicators into the State of the Region Report Card. Staff will bring forth to the Benchmarks Task Force discussions on further improvements to the Report Card content and development process. The items subject to future discussions for Report Card improvement include, for example, the following


- Issue categories included in the Report Card
 - may consider additional issue categories (e.g. energy, land use, water resources, solid waste, emergency preparedness, open space/habitat)
 - may consider reorganizing the existing issue categories
- Process for Report Card development
 - how to further enhance the grading objectivity
 - how to have more transparency in the process
 - how to involve more stakeholders in the process
- Additional guidelines with refined methodologies for grading
 - the need to develop more explicit criteria to support the respective grading
 - may need to reassess the current grade structure
 - consider the level of service burdens the region has incurred
(For example, about 40% of the nation's imports go through our region's ports and highway/rail system. This disproportionate burden should be considered when grading our progress.)

REPORT

FISCAL IMPACTS:


Publish the State of the Region Report and Report Card every two years while publishing the guest essays separately on an annual basis would not generate any additional fiscal impacts.

Reviewed by:




Division Manager

Reviewed by:



Department Director

Reviewed by:



Chief Financial Officer

ATTACHMENT 1

Benchmarks Task Force Membership (May 2008)

Hon. Ronald O. Loveridge, Mayor, City of Riverside, Task Force Chair
Hon. Debbie Cook, Mayor, City of Huntington Beach, Task Force Vice Chair
Hon. Mona Field, Board of Trustees, Los Angeles Community College District
Hon. Larry McCallon, Councilmember, City of Highland
Hon. Paul M. Nowatka, Councilmember, City of Torrance
Hon. Chris Norby, Supervisor, Orange County
Hon. Pam O'Connor, Councilmember, City of Santa Monica
Hon. Toni Young, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Port Hueneme
Rick Bishop, Western Riverside Council of Governments
Kimberly Collins, San Diego State University (Imperial Valley Campus)
Barry Engelberg, Orange County Transportation Authority
Fernando Guerra, Loyola Marymount University
Lamont "Monty" Hempel, University of Redlands
Dean Kubani, City of Santa Monica Environmental and Public Works
Jerilyn Lopez Mendoza, Environmental Defense
Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, University of California, Los Angeles
Dowell Myers, University of Southern California
Todd Priest, Building Industry Association of Southern California
Anil Puri, California State University, Fullerton
Ty Schuiling, San Bernardino Associated Governments
Arthur J. Shaw, Consulting Economist
Arnold Sherwood, University of California, Berkeley
Jim Stewart, Southern California Council on Environment and Development
Goetz Wolff, Center for Regional Employment Strategies and UCLA

ATTACHMENT 2

The State of the Region Program A Brief Description of the Objectives and Annual Process

Objectives

1. Tracking and assessing the performance of Southern California in comparison to other metropolitan regions in the nation.
2. Disseminating information on the region's performance to assist public officials, business and community leaders in developing appropriate strategies to improve our communities.
3. Informing and educating community residents on how our region is performing.

Intended Audiences

1. Elected officials at local, state and federal levels
2. Business and community leaders
3. Key agency staff including local government chief administrative officers and planning directors
4. Other key stakeholders and partners in regional planning
5. Community groups and residents

Report Preparation, Dissemination and Utilization

1. With the guidance of the Benchmarks Task Force, which consists of elected officials and issue expert representatives in the region, SCAG staff collected and analyzed information regarding the performance of the region. Regional performance was assessed with respect to issues including demography, economy, housing, transportation, environment, education and public safety. A Report titled "*The State of the Region*" is then prepared and released around December each year through a press conference.
2. A total of 1,500 copies of *The State of the Region* and 3,500 copies of the *Report Cards* have been distributed after press release to many interested parties, including, for example:
 - Regional Council and Policy Committee members including more than 100 elected officials;
 - Chief County and City Administrators of 193 local governments in the region;
 - local government planning directors;
 - members of the state and congressional delegations; and
 - regional public libraries.
3. Each year, the complete Report and Report Card are posted on SCAG's home page (www.scag.ca.gov) upon press release. Over the past five years, total downloads of the report have increased from about 30,000 to 80,000.

REPORT

4. For at least the past five years, the press conference to release *The State of the Region* has received very prominent media coverage throughout Southern California and beyond. Report coverage generally includes 25 newspapers (including outside of the region), 5 or more TV and radio stations respectively. Specifically, newspaper coverage generally includes the following:
 - Los Angeles Times
 - Los Angeles Daily News
 - Orange County Register
 - Riverside Press Enterprise
 - San Bernardino County Sun
 - Inland Valley Daily Bulletin
 - Antelope Valley Press
 - Hi-Desert Star
 - Los Angeles Business Journal
 - Long Beach Press Telegram
 - North County Times
 - Pasadena Independent
 - San Gabriel Valley Tribune
 - South Bay Daily Breeze
 - Victor Valley Daily Press
 - Korean Times
 - La Opinion
 - China Press
 - Chinese Daily News
 - Sing Tao Daily
 - San Jose Mercury News
 - San Diego Tribune
 - Merced News
 - Sacramento Bee
5. In addition to the media coverage, SCAG staff has also received invitations and made presentations to public and private organizations in the region on an on-going basis.
6. *The State of the Region* has been used as course materials in universities such as UCLA, UC Riverside and University of Southern California.
7. *The State of the Region* was identified by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) in its report to the Congress in 2004 as one of the few regional indicator initiatives containing a comprehensive indicator system (GAO Report - *Informing Our Nation: Improving How to Understand and Assess the USA's Position and Progress*, November 2004).
8. *The State of the Region* has received the 2006 PRISM Award and the 2007 Communicator Award for its impacts on community awareness.

REPORT

ATTACHMENT 3

Summary of State of the Region Report Card Grades, 1998 - 2006

	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06
Employment	B-	A-	B+	B	B-	B	B	B	B
Income	C+	C+	C	C	C-	C-	C	C	C
Housing	C-	C-	C-	D+	D+	D	D	D	D
Mobility	D	D	D	D	D-	D-	F	F	D-
Air Quality	C	B-	B	B-	C	C-	C	C	D
Education	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D-
Public Safety	B	B+	B+	B	B	B	B	B	B

ATTACHMENT 4

State of the Region Guest Essays, 1998-2007

Year	Essay Title	Author/Organization
2007	TODs for Southern California: Challenges and Prospects	Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris UCLA
	The Southern California Survey 2007: Continuities, Changes, and More Diversified Opinions about Quality of Life	Kim Haselhoff/UCLA Paul Ong/UCLA
	Air Quality and Health in the Greater Los Angeles Area: A Region in Crisis	Ed Avol/USC
2006	Demographic Change in the SCAG Region, 1970-2005	John Pitkin/USC
	The Southern California Public Opinion Survey 2006: Concerns Amid Satisfaction	Kim Haselhoff/UCLA Paul Ong/UCLA
	The Energy Defensive Economy: Challenges Ahead for Local Government	Ronald Cooke/Energy Expert
2005	The 2% Strategy: A Bold New Approach to Shape the Future of Southern California	Randall Lewis/ Lewis Operating Co.
	Goods Movement in Southern California: Challenge, Opportunity, Solution	John Husing Economics & Politics, Inc.
2004	Introduction: The Six Degrees of Regional Planning	Rick Bishop/WRCOG
	Is the 2% Strategy a Solution for Southern California	Bill Fulton/Solimar Research & USC
	Air Quality in Southern California: Time for a Paradigm Shift	Arthur Winer/UCLA
2003	The "Commons" in Southern California	John Fregoneses Fregonese Calthorpe Associates
2002	N/A (The report focused on assessing the 1990-2000 decade in addition to the annual change)	N/A
2001	Southern California's Divergent Growth Patterns and Future Prospects	David Friedman /New American Foundation
	Housing Southern California: Smart Growth Strategies for a New Era	Michell Menzer /ULI
	Energy Crisis in Southern California	Nancy Day/Energy Advisor Steve Eric/UCSD

REPORT

2000	Approaching Middle Age: Re-Defining the Southern California Metropolis	Bill Fulton/Solimar Research & USC
	The Widening Divide Revisited: Inequality in the Labor Market	Paul Ong/UCLA
	Ecological Footprints and Regional Sustainability	Ana Rosenbluth/USC
1999	The Southern California Economy: Growing Again, Challenges Ahead	Steve Levy/Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy
	The State of the Region - Transportation	Genevieve Giuliano/USC
	Educational Trends and Issues in Southern California	Barry Stern/ Public Performance Information Systems
1998	N/A (Inaugural Issue)	N/A



Regional Council CEHD Policy Committee

May 8, 2008

Ping Chang (chang@scag.ca.gov)
Program Manager
Performance Assessment & Monitoring
Program Development & Evaluation Division

Southern California Association of Governments



State of the Region

- Background on Annual Report/Report Card Process
 - Objectives
 - Intended audiences
 - Report preparation, dissemination and utilization
 - Recognitions received include:
 - 2004 - U.S. GAO report to the Congress
 - 2006 - PRISM Award
 - 2007 - Communicator Award

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Report Publication Schedule

- **Recommended Action:**

1. Publish the State of the Region Report and Report Card every two years instead of annually.
2. Publish the guest essays separately on an annual basis.

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Report Publication Schedule

An Objective of the Recommendation

- Move the State of the Region Program forward in a more effective way in light of the feedback received and the significant staff reductions.

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Report Publication Schedule

- Report Card grades generally change little over a one-year period

	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06
Employment	B-	A-	B+	B	B-	B	B	B	B
Income	C+	C+	C	C	C-	C-	C	C	C
Housing	C-	C-	C-	D+	D+	D	D	D	D
Mobility	D	D	D	D	D-	D-	F	F	D-
Air Quality	C	B-	B	B-	C	C-	C	C	D
Education	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D-
Public Safety	B	B+	B+	B	B	B	B	B	B

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Report Publication Schedule

- A two-year cycle for publishing report and report card would be more likely to detect cumulative changes than reporting annually.

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Guest Essay Publication Schedule

- The guest essays contained in the report that address strategic regional issues are of high quality and should receive more attention and be utilized more.

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Guest Essay Publication Schedule

- Publish the guest essays separately on an annual basis would continue to highlight timely important regional issues and policy implications.

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